

Remarks

Reconsideration of this Application is respectfully requested. Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 29, 32-49, and 51-58 are pending in the application, with claims 29, 36, 46, and 54 being the independent claims.

Interview Summary

On behalf of the Applicants, the undersigned wishes to express appreciation to Examiners Mathew and Donnelly for the courtesies extended during the personal interview conducted on June 15, 2004. During the interview on June 15, 2004, the subject matter of claims 29, 36, and 46 in view of U.S. Patent Nos. 5,788,608 to Wilkinson (the "Wilkinson reference"), 6,503,177 B2 to Herman (the "Herman reference"), and 6,131,593 to Greene et al. (the "Greene reference") was discussed with the Examiners. Additionally, potential new claim language was discussed with the Examiners. The Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all outstanding objections and rejections.

Claim Objections

Claims 29-35 stand objected to because of an antecedent basis informality. Claim 29 has been amended to correct the antecedent basis informality. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully submit that the objection to claims 29-35 has been overcome.

Claim Rejections

Claims 29-33, 35-42, and 46-50 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the Wilkinson reference in view of the Herman reference and the Greene reference. Claims 34, 43-45, and 51-53 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being

unpatentable over the Wilkinson reference in view of the Herman reference, the Greene reference, and U.S. Patent No. 5,992,434 to Berlin et al.

Independent claim 29 recites “a coupler disposable within said opening of said stabilizer and removably coupleable to said stabilizer, said coupler including a body portion and a lip formed on one end of said body portion, said lip adapted to mechanically engage said tip when said tip is disposed within said opening.” As discussed with the Examiners, none of the Wilkinson reference, the Herman reference, and the Greene reference disclose or suggest such a configuration. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 29 is allowable over the cited references. Based at least on their dependence upon claim 29, dependent claims 32-35 are also allowable over the cited references.

Independent claims 36 and 46 recite “a coupler including a first portion and a second portion removably coupleable to the first portion of the coupler.” As discussed with the Examiners, none of the Wilkinson reference, the Herman reference, and the Greene reference disclose or suggest such a configuration. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 36 and 46 are allowable over the cited references. Based at least on their dependence upon claim 36 or 46, dependent claims 37-45, 47-49, and 51-53 are also allowable over the cited references.

Claims 30-31 and 50 have been canceled, thereby rendering the rejection of such claims moot.

New Claims

Independent claim 54 includes subject matter that was discussed with the Examiner during the interview. The Applicants respectfully submit that claim 54 is allowable over the

cited references. Based at least on their dependence upon claim 54, dependent claims 55-57 are also allowable over the cited references. Additionally, based at least on its dependence upon claim 29 (which is allowable for at least the reasons set forth above), dependent claim 58 is also allowable over the cited references.

Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection have been properly traversed or rendered moot. The Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and that such objections and rejections be withdrawn. The Applicants believe that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that further personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any appropriate fees under 37 C.F.R.
§§ 1.16, 1.17, and 1.21 that may be required by this paper, and to credit any overpayment, to
Deposit Account No. 50-1283.


Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

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Respectfully submitted,
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